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SUBJECT: UTTAR PRADESH GOVERNMENT SHAKY - COULD FALL SHORTLY

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: In a July 13-15 visit to Uttar Pradesh (UP) Poloff met with a wide variety of interlocutors who speculated that the two year rule of Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav would soon come to an end. Pervasive mis-governance and corruption, and a fast-deteriorating law and order situation, that has seen organized crime entering into all facets of public life, have stretched UP to its limits. Determined to end Yadav's rule, the UPA could dissolve the government at any time. With neither Congress nor the SP in any position to return to power, the low-caste focused BSP is likely to win any upcoming election, perhaps with an absolute majority. BSP leader Mayawati is intent on quickly gaining control of the reins of government and cleaning house. A decisive BSP victory in UP could cause Congress to concede control of the state to Mayawati in exchange for BSP entry into the UPA, ending Congress hopes of regaining the Hindi belt. However, a rejuvenated BSP could also provide a solid block of MP's to the UPA government in New Delhi and reduce its reliance on the Left. End Summary.

Seismic Shift in Lucknow  
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12. (U) In Lucknow from July 13-15, Poloff met with political leaders, academics, civil servants, journalists, and Shia Muslim maulvis and community leaders. Although the time frame is uncertain, most agreed that a change of government in India's largest state (population 166 million) is imminent, and that Mayawati will return as Chief Minister, perhaps winning an absolute majority in new elections. While Poloff was in Lucknow, Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav called an emergency session of the Legislative Assembly with only three days notice, sparking speculation that he could dissolve the government and call for new elections.

13. (C) Lucknow editors from the regional editions of the "Pioneer" and "Asian Age" confirmed to Poloff on July 14 that the people of UP so deeply resent SP misrule that the UPA could dismiss the state government and impose governor's rule at "the time of its choosing." They predicted that the UPA would likely sideline the notoriously corrupt state police force and introduce the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and other centrally-controlled paramilitaries to restore law and order, forcing the now-dominant "mafias" which permeate all levels of the UP public life, to "lie low."

14. (C) Both journalists predicted that the BSP would be the big winner in any new election, pointing out that the party was highly organized, has spent the past two years "laying the groundwork" necessary to win an election, and that most people in UP concede that it provide a modicum of good governance. The editors confirmed that there was vast and growing disgust with the SP and its rule in UP and predicted this resentment would result in a huge swing against him in any election. The reporters could not confirm whether the BSP could return to power on its own or would seek an alliance with Congress to push it over the top.

Congress Can't Gain Momentum  
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15. (U) Press reports indicate that while Congress is strong in New Delhi, it has no chance of returning to power in Lucknow. A report in the Lucknow "Pioneer" characterized the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Congress as a "Party heading to nowhere," attributing the lack of a momentum to Rahul Gandhi's failure to participate in party activities, "an eerie disinterest among the top leadership," and growing division. Characterizing Party President Salman Khursheed and "unrelentingly arrogant," the "Pioneer" pointed to conflict between his proponents and opponents so intense that it recently led to fistfights in the streets of Lucknow. Khursheed announced in May that Congress would hold 100 rallies throughout the state, but nothing happened until July 11. To date Congress has held two rallies and canceled two more.

16. (C) In their conversation with Poloff on July 13, Khursheed and Congress Spokesman Rajesh Pandey were upbeat despite the negative press reporting. They confirmed that the SP government cannot last, attributing Mulayam's imminent downfall to uncontrolled corruption, lack of governance, and a breakdown in law and order, which have caused a total halt to development, investment, and maintenance of the state's

flimsy infrastructure. Insisting that the SP has "taken no practical steps" to help Muslims, Pandey was confident that they would withdraw from the SP and come back to his party. Saying that UP voters were "sick of casteism," he insisted that there was a longing in the state for a return to rule by a national party.

17. (C) Khursheed confirmed that Congress had no hope of returning to power in UP, saying that it could take 10 years for his party to orchestrate a "bottom-up reform movement" to permanently change UP politics. His goal is to increase the Congress tally to 66 seats in the UP Legislative Assembly of 402 seats. This means, he conceded, that Congress will have to find a coalition partner, as it cannot afford to remain outside of government. Khursheed affirmed that without Ministers, Congress has no access to the patronage required to become a real force. Khursheed refused to confirm whether Congress would eventually sign on with the BSP or the SP, saying that it had to be realistic and go with the party that provided the most benefits.

#### The BJP Sees Power Slipping Away

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18. (C) Congress leader Pandey dismissed the BJP, saying that its fortunes were declining, as Advani and Hindutva were losing their appeal and the powerful Brahmin votebank was leaving to join Congress. Predicting that former PM and proven votegetter AB Vajpayee would soon leave active politics, Pandey said the BJP would then lose its sole source of popular appeal. He opined that the recent BSP program to enlist Brahmins would fail, while claiming that his party would "wean the dalits from the BSP."

19. (C) On July 13, BJP President Kesri Nath Tripathi insisted to Poloff that his party would continue to stress Hindutva as the best way to return to power. He also claimed that the BJP would benefit from the recent spate of terrorist attacks in India. Pointing out that Hindus constitute 80 percent of the population and will always vote to support Hindu values, he asserted they are not expressing their outrage against the attacks and support for Hindutva because Hindus are "tolerant" and "not demonstrative." Implying that only a BJP government can tackle these issues, Tripathi claimed that Indians know Pakistan is "the mother of terrorism," and is bent on using a "terrorist nexus" of Naxalites, Nepali Maoists, and Islamic fanatics to destabilize India.

110. (C) Tripathi characterized the recent visit of Party President LK Advani to Ayodhya as "very successful." Pointing out that the BJP held Mulayam responsible for the near success of the terrorist attack there, he implied that the Chief Minister is "100 percent pro-Muslim," and does not want a Hindu temple built at the Ram birthplace. Since Congress and the SP both "encouraged terrorism," Tripathi noted, the BJP is the only party capable of dealing with this challenge.

111. (C) Tripathi was also convinced that the Mulayam government would soon fall and that state elections are imminent, noting that with the law and order situation deteriorating daily, the governor could call for a dismissal. With Mulayam weakened by non-performance, he added, an election in UP could well result in a "hung assembly" and continuing governor's rule.

112. (C) Conceding that the BJP was number three after the BSP and SP in the last elections, Tripathi confirmed that it could only return to power in coalition with one of these regional parties. However, disappointed by Mayawati's "unreliability" and opposed to Mulayam, Tripathi confirmed that the BJP is determined to go it alone. Instead of seeking out a coalition partner, the party will inaugurate an "education campaign" emphasizing the poor record of the regional parties and painting the BJP as the party of "good governance."

#### The BSP's Time is Now

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113. (C) In a July 14 conversation with Poloff, BSP General Secretary Satish Chandra Mishra was extremely confident that

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his party was set to return to power after two years in opposition. Mishra expected the SP government to fall and the BSP to win an absolute majority in upcoming elections. He pointed out that in the 2003 state elections, the BSP lost 100 seats by 2,000 votes or less and is set to win most of them in a future poll. Mishra noted that the recent BSP rally to welcome Brahmins into the party attracted 300,000 participants from all over the state, implying that the addition of Brahmin voters would provide the needed impetus to ensure a BSP win.

14. (C) Mishra pointed out that Mulayam is losing strength every day, and is well aware that the Congress governor is monitoring the deteriorating law and order situation and could dissolve the house at any time. With this in mind, Mulayam is likely to dissolve the assembly and call a new elections while he still has a chance of winning, and could have the Legislative Assembly name him as "caretaker Chief Minister." Such a move would enable him to control state resources that he could use to rig the election. In addition, Mishra (one of the state's leading lawyers) has filed a civil case contesting the 2003 defection of 40 legislators from the BSP to the SP. The case could be decided in the next several weeks and if Mishra wins, the 40 SP legislators would be asked to vacate their seats, the SP would lose its majority and the government would fall.

15. (C) Mishra predicted that Chief Minister Yadav would unleash a wave of violence, intimidation and vote-rigging in a last-ditch attempt to retain his hold on power, but all his efforts would fail. Such tactics, he pointed out, only work in by-elections when the "goons" can be concentrated to intimidate voters and local police can be convinced to look the other way. This time, he noted, the election would be state-wide and the SP would not have the needed "muscle." In addition, the police are aware that the SP is on its way out and will remain neutral.

16. (C) Mayawati has an "action plan" emphasized Mishra, that will quickly turn the situation around and revive UP. Her first priority after taking office will be to "clean up" the state administration, restore effective governance and take on the "mafias" that have become entrenched during the past two years of SP rule. Mishra claimed that although Mayawati has received numerous death threats from the criminals, she will pursue put them and their SP supporters behind bars. Mishra insisted that relations between Mayawati and Congress President Sonia Gandhi are very good, hinting that after Mayawati's election, Congress would sever ties with the SP both in New Delhi and Lucknow and extend support to the BSP. In New Delhi, he claimed, the BSP would join the government with several of its MP's slated for cabinet positions. In exchange for BSP support, Congress would have to concede BSP control of UP.

Comment

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17. (C) Like many Indian politicians, Mulayam has grown out of touch as he surrounds himself with sycophants and does not seem to be aware of his inherent weakness. Few in Lucknow give him much chance of survival. Although Poloff spent the entire afternoon with SP leader Bhagwati Singh, he studiously avoided politics and made no attempt to defend his Chief Minister.

18. (C) With 80 seats in Parliament, UP is so important that a change of government will have national repercussions. Should Mayawati win a working majority on her own as many suspect, Congress would have to concede BSP control of the state, and the BSP could win a long-term hold on power in Lucknow. This would encourage BSP ambitions to be a national voice for dalits and it could pick up additional MP's in future national elections. Should a revived BSP press for entry into the UPA, it could increase the UPA margin in parliament. Such a move would push the SP and its Left allies closer together and hasten the day when the Left will withdraw its support from the UPA and announce the formation of a "third front" to challenge UPA rule. However, BSP support would also liberate the UPA government from its current reliance on the Left's support, at a time when Manmohan Singh appears to be growing increasingly fed-up with the criticisms and negativism of his Communist allies.  
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